

Teaching in Freedom, Empowering Teachers

Held annually on 5 October since 1994, World Teachers' Day commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the 1966 UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, which celebrated its 50th anniversary during last year's edition. The 1966 Recommendation constitutes the main reference framework for addressing teachers' rights and responsibilities on a global scale.

This year, World Teachers' Day commemorates the 20th anniversary of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel. Teaching personnel at institutions of higher education are often overlooked in discussions concerning the status of teachers. Like teachers at pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels, teaching in higher education is a profession requiring expert knowledge, specialized skills, and pedagogical competence.

World Teachers' Day 2017 will be celebrated under the theme "Teaching in Freedom, Empowering Teachers", echoing the 2015 theme that followed the adoption of the new

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (link is external) in September 2015, when teacher empowerment was reaffirmed as a top priority in all education and development strategies.



World Teachers' Day is celebrated annually worldwide and brings together governments, multi- and bilateral organizations, NGOs, private sectors, teachers and experts in the field of teaching. With the adoption of SDG 4 on education, and the dedicated target 4.c recognizing teachers as key to the achievement of the 2030 Education Agenda, it has become the occasion to mark achievements and reflect on ways to counter the remaining challenges for the promotion of the teaching profession, like the acute shortage of teachers. Indeed, according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the world needs 69 Million teachers if we are to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.

Across all education levels, political pressure and business interests can curb the ability of educators to teach in freedom. Teachers living and working in countries and communities affected by conflicts and instability often face greater challenges, including rising intolerance, discrimination, and related restrictions on research and teaching.

This year marks the 20 year anniversary of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, which complements the 1966 UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. Together, these instruments constitute the main reference framework on the rights and responsibilities of teachers and educators. Both stress the importance of teacher autonomy and academic freedom in building a world in which education and learning are truly universal.

As the world works together to realize the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals, we appeal to our partners in governments and across the education and private sectors to commit to building a highly skilled, valued and empowered education workforce. This constitutes a critical path to realizing SDG 4, which envisions a world in which every girl, boy, woman and man has access to quality

education and lifelong learning opportunities.

This means securing decent working conditions and fair wages for all teachers including at the tertiary level. It means providing teachers with training and development. It means increasing the number of quality teachers, especially in those countries with high numbers of untrained teaching personnel. It means removing unnecessary restrictions on research and teaching and defending academic freedom at all education levels. Finally, it means raising the status of teachers around the world in a way that honors and reflects the impact they have on the strength of society.

This World Teachers' Day, join us in empowering teachers to teach in freedom so that, in turn, every child and every adult is free to learn – to the benefit of a better world.

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Guy Ryder, Director-General of ILO

Anthony Lake, Executive-Director of UNICEF

Achim Steiner, Administrator of UNDP

Fred van Leeuwen, General-Secretary of Education International